



The Precious Lies of Madeleine de Scudéry: Her Admirable and Infuriating Life. Book 4

Eleanor Knowles Dugan

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Madeleine de Scudéry was the bestselling novelist in seventeenth-century Europe, translated into a half-dozen languages including English and Arabic. She was forced to publish under her brother's name and achieved such fame that he was elected to the Académie Française. She lived in a time of dark savagery and cynicism, yet she persisted in believing in kindness, compassion, loyalty, and joy. She sought absolute anonymity and gained only notoriety. And for what was she notorious? For profligacy and prudery, for passionate sensuality and icy frigidity, for arrogance and shyness, for vanity and modesty, for outrageous falsehoods and painful honesty. She was accused of corrupting the morals of the most licentious age since Caligula's, and then accused (by the same enemies) of being a virgin! She spoke out eloquently against the slavery of marriage and love, and she became involved in one of the most profound, impassioned, intense, enduring, and unlikely love affairs in history. She was a meek and servile woman who enraged her inferiors, an arrogant poseur who delighted princes, a forceful feminist who sulked and flirted and pretended to be stupid. Ridiculed for being dour, crabbed, and humorless, she beguiled, enchanted, enthralled. She was, in short, a paragon of paradox. And she has been utterly forgotten.

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